



Nutrition Services

Reducing resources (FTE's and grant revenue) would mean fewer participants served. This could result in an increase of nutritional risks not being addressed among Program eligible Louisianans. The larger the resources, the more eligible Louisianans can receive nutritious foods and nutrition education services, lowering nutritional problems among Louisianans and increasing individual responsibility through increased knowledge of what constitutes healthy foods.

Objective

To provide supplemental foods and nutrition education to low income women, infants, and children while serving as an adjunct to health care during critical times of growth and development, preventing health problems and improving the health status.

Performance Indicators

- Number of monthly WIC participants
- Cost per WIC client served
- Average food benefit cost
- Percentage of eligible clients served
- 1/6 nutrition education federal spending standard

Narrative

WIC is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. This Program is 100% federally funded through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service.

WIC serves the following population:

- Pregnant women until six weeks postpartum;
- Breastfeeding women as long as they continue to breastfeed their infants until the infant is one year old;
- Postpartum women until six months after delivery or pregnancy termination
- Infants until 1 year of age
- Children until 5 years of age

Recipients are eligible for the Program based on participation in the Medicaid, SNAP (formerly Food Stamps), TANF or proof of income below 185 percent of poverty; proof of Louisiana residency; proof of identity; while having a nutrition risk based on nutrition assessment.

WIC activities are conducted at the local agency as well as at the state agency levels. At the local level, activities include nutrition assessment (measuring height/length, weight, hemoglobin and obtaining nutrition/medical history), nutrition care plan development, nutrition counseling, educational activities, continued nutrition guidance for eligible participants, referrals to health and social services, breastfeeding promotion, and issuance of monthly food benefits. Those services are provided through a network of 112 clinic sites across the state.

- Nutrition assessment is conducted by Competent Professional Authorities (CPA) who are health professionals such as nutritionists (Louisiana licensed as a dietitian/nutritionist); health educators (meet Civil Service job specifications); and nurses (registered nurses and licensed practical nurses).
- Nutrition counseling specific to the participant/caregivers is conducted and nutrition concerns and nutrition risks are identified by the CPA's.
- Medical nutrition therapy is provided to participants identified at highest nutrition risk. Medical nutrition therapy must be provided by a registered and Louisiana licensed dietitian/nutritionist. Examples of medical nutrition therapy include diet instruction/education for a prenatal WIC participant with low/high weight gain, gestational diabetes or high blood pressure; infants or children who must be tube fed, have food allergies, or have Type 1 diabetes, or which are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight, and who demonstrate poor growth, etc.
- Breastfeeding guidance is provided in WIC clinics and by peer counselors (who have previously breastfed an infant). Breastfeeding is also encouraged through the provision or the loan of breast pumps, assisting breastfeeding WIC mothers wishing to continue breastfeeding as they return to school or work as a result.
- WIC clinic staff is mandated to screen WIC participants for immunizations and provides referral services to public or private providers. Referrals for preventive care and other health and social services for which the participant may qualify are also given.
- Based on the food package prescribed by the CPA (addressing the nutritional risks identified during the nutrition assessment), monthly food benefits or prescriptions are provided to the WIC participants under the form of Food Instruments (FIs or negotiable checks). *See attached WIC Food Instrument Reconciliation Process.* Food prescriptions include infant formula, infant cereal and infant fruits and vegetables for infant participants; and cereals, milk, soy milk, cheese, eggs, juice, peanut butter, beans, canned tuna or salmon, whole grains (100% whole grain bread, brown rice) and fresh fruits and vegetables, for women and children participants. FIs are provided to be redeemed at one of the 700 approved WIC authorized vendors (grocery stores) across the state.

At the state agency level, four main activities are conducted for the statewide management of the Program including gathering, communicating, and enforcing Program policies and procedures; management of the WIC Authorized Vendors; management of 38 contract clinics and other contracts used by the Program for on-going operations, including contract with a Financial Service Center for processing of over 2 million food instruments per year, and financial management including funding and procurement management.

- Clinical Program Development
- Vendor Management and Fraud Detection
- Contracts Management
- Financial Management

Better Health

Activities conducted by the WIC Program advance the State Outcome Goal of “Better Health” as they address the main requirements of the Request for Results:

Manage costs and efficient management of resources

In order to accurately account for the use of program resources and maximize the effectiveness of the agency resources, the Program established Standard Operating Procedures based on federal and state regulations relative to allowable costs and procurement rules. The state agency conducts on-going analysis of revenues and expenditures, and through Management Evaluations, internal control and audits (in cooperation with DHH Fiscal Office and OPH Program Integrity) expenditures are analyzed for program integrity and cost effectiveness. Additionally, the WIC Program practices cost containment, including the federally mandated collection of infant formula rebates through a contract with an infant formula manufacturer (helping to reduce food expenditures by \$36 million a year). Food package cost is controlled through monthly monitoring of food prices submitted to the Program and analysis of vendors’ food sales attributed to WIC. The Program collaborates on an on-going basis with other public health programs in procuring workstations and other infrastructure, medical supplies, and other clinical services used by several Programs.

Use of technology and Best Practice

In 2001, the WIC Program introduced the latest in food instrument printing technology (MICR printers) which improved and sped printing of food benefits in the clinics. The Program subsequently introduced thermal label printers to clinics, effectively putting an end to the use of the old Dot-Matrix printing technology in health units. In May 2006, the WIC Program implemented a statewide web-based management information system which streamlined and standardized the way WIC participants are served, introducing point of service and electronic medical records. Through automation, dual participation in the Program (participant fraud) was reduced dramatically, and Program management and data reporting were enhanced. Through the use of the OPH portal and the DHH internet web site, Program information, documents and

policies are effectively disseminated and online trainings are efficiently conducted with results documented. In 2003, the WIC Program conducted an efficiency study. The study provided recommendations to improve service provision performance relative to cost of patient served, number of patients served per CPA hour, as well as participant and staff satisfaction. A Best Practice relative to the WIC participant certification process was established including the most-efficient patient flow mapping and staff mix.

Per request from its sole funding source (USDA-FNS), the Louisiana WIC Program has started the early phases of planning for the implementation of EBT: Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) to replace food benefits delivery from paper food instruments to electronic cards. EBT has been proven with the SNAP (formerly Food Stamps) Program to efficiently deliver benefits and increase program reporting and integrity.

Increase the number of children ready for Kindergarten through

- **Providing adequate access to healthcare**

The WIC Program represents a gateway to other health services through needs assessment and referral to appropriate services. Also noteworthy is the Louisiana WIC Program's Mississippi Delta project initiative in region 8 which provides free transportation to WIC participants in two rural parishes to increase access to WIC services in two of the poorest counties in the country

- **Increasing immunization rates**

Per federal regulation, WIC clinic staff must review immunizations status for infants and children participants, and provides referrals.

- **Reducing the effects of risk factors and impacting the child's ability to learn**

Through the provision of supplemental nutritious foods, health education and medical nutrition therapy, nutritional risk conditions of low income women, infants, and children are reduced, during critical times of growth and development.

Use of other health indexes to evaluate health of Louisianans

School Based Health Center and BMI data, Louisiana Report Card on Physical activity and health for children and youth, PedNSS, PRAMS, and the CDC breastfeeding report card are used to evaluate WIC participants.

Incorporate Healthy People 2010 goals

Through the provision of nutrition education and counseling, our activities incorporate maternal and child health, nutrition and overweight, and physical activity and fitness: increasing

breastfeeding rates, increasing # of persons > age 2 that eat 2 fruit servings or more per day and 3 veggies per day, decreasing fat intake. The WIC Program, through its involvement with the following initiatives and organizations, promotes an increase in fruits and vegetables intake among its participants:

- Initiation of Cash Value Vouchers with the new WIC Food Package rule (for issuance of fresh fruits and vegetables)
- Fruits and Veggies More Matters campaign
- Pilot implementation of WIC Farmers' Market in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Market Umbrella organization

Tobacco use and substance abuse

Per federal regulation, the WIC Program is required to screen women participants and caregivers of infant and child participants, and provide appropriate referrals relative to tobacco use and substance abuse.

Disease management to reduce morbidity and mortality

The WIC Program assists in the prevention of chronic diseases by the provision of nutrition education relative to identified nutrition risks and by serving as an adjunct to good health. These activities also result in positive effects on fetal deaths, low birth weight, morbidity and mortality. Medical nutrition therapy is also provided to manage specific health problems.

Provide array of services through preventive services and primary care services

WIC activities provide Nutrition and health referral services to the most vulnerable population in order to ensure better health. Through collaboration with many community entities, the WIC Program works to provide awareness and prevention of obesity and its associated chronic diseases.

Geographic distribution of providers and facilities

WIC services are provided in every parish of the state, through a network of public and private providers (112), with multiple clinic sites available in the most populated areas. Food benefits are mostly provided through agreements with 704 WIC Authorized Vendors (grocers) located throughout the state. Location of the vendors is a criterion in vendor selection and authorization to ensure easy access to food benefits by participants. Specific WIC approved infant formulas for special medical circumstances (unavailable in grocery stores) are available for statewide distribution through direct order procurement from formula manufacturers on state contract.

Cultural competence

WIC activities aim at empowering Louisiana citizens to lead a responsible, healthy life that prevents or reduces obesity and related health conditions

Quality providers and facilities

WIC requires employment of registered and Louisiana licensed dietitians to provide medical nutrition therapy to participants. Personnel utilized to identify Nutrition eligibility in the WIC Program must meet the qualifications of a Competent Professional Authority (CPA) as mandated in USDA regulations (7 CFR 246.7).

Integrated and community based care and services

WIC activities are integrated with other health services in public parish health units as well as other public and private community-based facilities.

Social environment

Breastfeeding peer counselors help break the social and cultural barriers surrounding the issue of Breastfeeding. The Fruits & Veggies More Matters social marketing campaign, the WIC Farmers' Market Program and the new WIC food package encourage Louisiana citizens to increase their intake of fruits and vegetables.

Promote healthy lifestyles

Through the routine screenings conducted, provision of supplemental foods targeted to specific nutritional risks, nutrition education, breastfeeding promotion and support, and promotion of physical activity, the WIC Program activities have been proven successful at promoting healthy lifestyles.

Encourage childhood literacy and improve health literacy

The Louisiana WIC Program has been involved in numerous childhood literacy initiatives and projects. In 2002, in order to integrate reading readiness into the nutrition education received by WIC participants, the WIC program initiated a nutrition education project entitled "Breastfeeding + Reading = A Smart Start." The objective of this particular class was to help prenatal mothers on the WIC program understand how breastfeeding and early reading experiences promote optimal development in children. Louisiana has a high rate of illiteracy, therefore this project also taught mothers who are unable to read that they can give their child a head start by holding a book and telling the infant a story while breastfeeding.

In 2005 the Louisiana WIC Program was granted \$25,000 in special funds to purchase 20,000 copies of the children's book, "The Berenstain Bears and Too Much TV". The books were

purchased directly from the publisher at a discounted rate of \$1.14 each and included the WIC program logo in the front cover. The books were distributed to WIC families with at least 1 child aged 1-5 years. The book was part of an education campaign to limit screen time of children. Participant were surveyed at the next WIC visit to determine home use of the book and if any changes were reported as a result

In 2008, the Louisiana WIC Program purchased 50,000 copies of the children's book "Zobey, A Trip to Bugland". This nutrition education campaign also included a DVD that featured child nutrition and physical activity messages. The books were funded by the USDA and were part of the Nutrition Services childhood obesity initiative. The books were distributed to WIC families with at least 1 child aged 1-5 years.

In 2009, the Louisiana WIC Program was awarded \$30,000 from USDA to purchase 30,000 copies of the Sesame Street, "The Get Healthy Now Show" DVD and children's book. This was part of a unique partnership with Sesame Workshop and the National WIC Association. The kit contained a DVD featuring Sesame characters that encourages children to sing, dance and play games. The kit also contains a storybook and parent's guide that encourages families to make healthier choices with nutrition tips and recipes.

All WIC education material is provided to participants utilizing 6th grade comprehension level and includes color pictures of nutritious foods provided by the Program.

Partnerships and collaborations

- Birthing hospitals and other non-WIC breastfeeding peer counseling programs
- Department of Agriculture and Market Umbrella for pilot WIC Farmers Market
- Office of Public Health (OPH) Immunizations Program
- Secretary of State for voter registration at WIC clinics
- Division of Administrative Law for WIC participant and WIC authorized vendor fair hearings
- Partners for Healthy Babies for referral and outreach
- Maternal and Child Health (MCH), Family Planning and Children Special Health Services share medical supplies cost
- Cost sharing with MCH contract with American Pregnancy Association for help line services providing information on WIC participation, health and healthcare referrals
- Clinic services are provided through a network of 74 parish public health units and 38 clinic sites operated via 28 contract agencies including LSU hospitals, parish governments, federally qualified health centers, and private medical providers.

Federal statutes governing WIC activities

- **WIC Program:** Child Nutrition Act of 1966, Title 7 Agriculture CFR Part 246. CFDA: 10.557.

- **WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling:** Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004. CFDA: 10.557.

WIC participation is reported as a standard set used by USDA which is the number of participants who possess one or more food instruments valid for redemption during the reported month.

The WIC Program serves 59 percent of all infants born in Louisiana and 65% of all eligible infants and children identified by USDA.

Below is the latest history of Louisiana WIC participation:

	SFY 2009	SFY 2008	SFY 2007
Pregnant women:	17,491	17,567	13,775
Postpartal women:	15,467	15,515	17,333
Breastfeeding women:	4,329	3,980	3,473
Infants:	41,843	41,869	36,429
Children:	67,861	59,487	55,350
Total:	146,991	138,417	126,361

As reported in September 2009 by the American Dietetic Association in their Policy Initiatives and Advocacy report “On The Pulse”, USDA Secretary Thomas Vilsack told state department heads at the two-day Healthy Kids, Healthy Future; Promising Practices and Policy for Health Promotion and Obesity Prevention in Early Care and Education conference: **“for every dollar spent on WIC, three dollars are saved in Medicaid.”**

See below links to published studies:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/WIC/FILES/savadd.pdf>

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/WIC/FILES/SavVol2-Pt2.pdf>

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/WIC/FILES/SavVol2-Pt1.pdf>

Other links:

WIC studies archives:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/WIC/WIC-archive.htm>

See below link to USDA-Food and Nutrition Service-WIC web site:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/>

See below link to map of current 112 Louisiana WIC clinics:

<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=109016704311035287612.00046fd97d234bb1d3dc1&ll=31.428663,-91.922607&spn=4.049266,7.064209&z=7>

See below link to map of current 704 Louisiana WIC Authorized Vendors:

<http://mapalist.com/Public/PublicMapViewShell.aspx?mapid=59948>

See below link to “The WIC Program: Background, Trends, and Economic Issues” national study

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR73/>